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ABSTRACT

The present study assessed high school and college faculty members' perceptions of students who smoke and students who do not smoke. Respondents included 37 college faculty members and 35 high school faculty members. Respondents completed a one-page survey consisting of items pertaining to current and previous personal smoking habits, motivations for smoking and not smoking, and perceptions of smokers and nonsmokers. Participants were asked to describe their impression of an average student in these two categories along the following dimensions: intelligence, hostility, judgment, artistic creativity, independence, conscientiousness, and ambition. Within subject t-test analyses conducted on the responses from high school and college faculty members revealed that smokers were rated more negatively on all of the personality dimensions assessed, except for artistic creativity. (Contains 22 references and 2 tables.) (GCP)

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Type of Discrimination*

By
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Faculty members' attitudes toward students who smoke

The last permitted type of discrimination

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Abstract

Attitudes toward cigarette smoking have become markedly more negative in recent years. As bans gain more widespread support, smokers may be experiencing increasing amounts of discrimination. Previous research has revealed that nonsmokers see smokers less favorably than their nonsmoking counterparts in terms of both intelligence and wisdom. In addition, nonsmokers consider smokers to be less attractive, less desirable dating or marriage partners, less desirable employees and coworkers, worse students, and more sexually active. Although discrimination against smokers in the workplace has received some attention, little research has focused on prejudice against student smokers in academic settings.

The present study assessed high school and college faculty members' perceptions of students who smoke and students who do not smoke. Respondents included 37 college faculty members and 35 high school faculty members. Respondents completed a one-page survey consisting of items pertaining to current and previous personal smoking habits, motivations for smoking and not smoking, and perceptions of smokers and nonsmokers. Participants were asked to describe their impression of an average student in these two categories along the following dimensions: intelligence, hostility, judgment, artistic creativity, independence, conscientiousness, and ambition.

Within subject t-test analyses conducted on the responses from high school and college faculty members revealed that smokers were rated more negatively on all of the personality dimensions assessed except for artistic creativity. Faculty members' ratings of smokers' and nonsmokers' artistic creativity were not significantly different. Independent samples t-tests comparing high school and college instructors' ratings of students who smoke cigarettes showed that high school instructors' ratings of smokers were significantly more negative than ratings obtained from college instructors on several of the dimensions evaluated. High school instructors described smokers as less intelligent, conscientious, and independent than college instructors described students who smoke.

Introduction

Cigarette smoking has been a popular pasttime in American culture for many years. Long before the harms were known, cigarette smoking was considered a highly acceptable form of behavior. Gradually, the truth was unfurled regarding smoking and its detrimental effects on human health. Lung cancer became a widespread problem caused by years of cigarette smoking. More astonishingly, the focus has currently shifted towards second-hand smoke, which also has been known to cause cancer. In 1993, the Environmental Protection Agency declared that second-hand smoke causes cancer in human beings. Since then, public attitudes about smoking have been complex (Robinson & Speer, 1995). Despite the known and highly researched statistics, there are many Americans who continue to smoke, but also those who have taken a very oppositional stance on the issue. Because of recent health knowledge, attitudes towards individuals who smoke have changed quite dramatically in recent decades, making cigarette smoking a complicated topic to discuss.

According to Longo, Brownson, Johnson, Hewett, Kruse, Novotny, & Logan (1996), cigarette smoking is extremely harmful, accounting for more than 400,000 deaths in America in 1990 alone. The annual economic medical cost of cigarette smoking is estimated to be about 50 billion dollars, which also takes into account lost workplace productivity. Due to this loss of money, many businesses have been considered smoking bans. Allowing smoking in the workplace increases costs for employers in areas such as ventilation, safety code expenses, and the replacement of furniture and computer equipment. With most adult Americans spending a considerable amount of time each day in their place of employment, smoking bans have had an influence on the smoking habits of employees (Longo et al., 1996). Bans may in fact facilitate individual decisions to quit smoking. Researchers have become increasingly aware that smoking is influenced by legal, social, economic, and physical environment (Longo et al., 1996).

Smoking bans in the workplace provide a changed environment in which healthy behaviors can be accomplished more easily. The Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO) authorized the first industry-wide ban in hospitals. Hospitals were required to go smoke free by December 31, 1993. In a study performed by Longo et al., (1996) the policies' effects on smoking behavior of full-time employees working in smoke free hospitals compared to current and former smokers working in smoke filled environments were analyzed. The goal of the study was to determine the impact of bans on behavior of individuals employed in smoke-free workplaces compared to those employed in non-smoke-free workplaces. It was anticipated that the smoking ban would change social norms and create an environment that favored a decrease in smoking prevalence. Results of this study indicated that hospital employees subjected to the workplace smoking ban had increased quitting rates and may have had increased movement on the stages-of-change quitting continuum, when compared to the comparison group (Longo et al., 1996). Thus, it was concluded that environmental changes may facilitate change in an individual's behavior. Since many Americans spend most of their hours at work, workplace behavior can influence individual decision making sufficiently. When smoking is permitted, it becomes part of the culture and norm of that environment, possibly facilitating smoking behaviors (Longo et al., 1996). Therefore, bans are not only useful at promoting healthy lifestyles, but also useful in cutting medical costs, life insurance costs, and health insurance costs.

What began simply with businesses banning smoking has now grown into entire states. On November 27, 2002, Delaware joined a handful of states in implementing a ban on smoking

in almost every indoor place. The state's policy is one of the few in the nation and possibly the most wide-ranging, including restaurants, bars, and casinos. Opponents estimated that the state would lose as much as 57 million dollars annually due to reduced play at the slot machines, but the governor feels this is a low price to pay for the increased health of the people (Minner, 2002).

The legislation that regulates smoking has two important functions. First, it serves to protect non-smokers from the harmful health effects of secondhand smoke, and second, it serves to prevent young people from smoking. In order to characterize public opinions about such legislation, the National Cancer Institute and the American Cancer Society surveyed citizens of eight states, using the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System. Participants were surveyed between July and August of 1993 as part of the American Stop Smoking Intervention Study for Cancer Prevention (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995). Respondents were given a list of public locations and for each, were asked to evaluate whether smoking should be allowed in all areas, some areas, or not allowed at all. Respondents were also given a list of five strategies that might prevent teenagers from smoking and were asked to rate the strategies as not at all effective, somewhat effective, or very effective (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995).

Results indicated that public opinion about banning smoking varied across settings. Respondents were more supportive of bans in fast food restaurants and indoor sporting events than in sit-down restaurants and indoor malls (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995). Smokers were less likely to support any kind of bans than were nonsmokers. With regard to strategies, all were considered to be effective by most respondents. It was believed that banning all smoking inside and outside school property would be an effective strategy. Most respondents also favored a ban on smoking in schools that would apply not only to students, but also to faculty and visitors, and one that would carry over into school sponsored events. Banning cigarette advertising, enforcing stronger laws with regard to cigarette access, banning cigarette vending machines, and increasing taxes on cigarettes were also seen as effective strategies (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 1995). These findings support previous research that has documented public support for regulating tobacco use in public places and lends support to the notion of an increasing amount of discrimination against smokers.

In 2002, The CDC once again examined people's attitudes about smoking bans in specific areas (2002). The proportion that felt that smoking should not be allowed in restaurants ranged from 44.3 percent in North Carolina to 63.6 percent in Montana. A uniformly high proportion of participants felt that smoking should not be allowed at all in schools and day care centers. The percentage that felt that smoking should not be allowed at all in indoor work areas ranged from 66.4 percent in Wisconsin to 83.8 percent in Washington D.C. Nonsmokers and current smokers were found to have similar attitudes about not allowing smoking at all in schools and day care centers. However, there was a large difference between nonsmokers and current smokers' attitudes on whether there should be no smoking at all in restaurants and indoor work areas.

As people realize that smoking is still a problem among the youth population, their concern for these adolescents' welfare is increasing. Many people agree that placing certain restrictions on tobacco would make it less appealing to young people. Increasing the tax on cigarettes, restricting advertising, and enforcing the law against those who sell tobacco products to minors all serve to hinder youth from wanting to or being able to begin smoking. Bailey and Crowe (1994) conducted a national telephone survey of adults in the United States in order to determine people's support of these restrictions. Some of the proposals were: imposing fines on

people who sell tobacco to minors, banning all advertising of tobacco products in the media, and increasing cigarette excise taxes. Not surprisingly, 94% of respondents believed that smoking by children and adolescents was a "very serious" or "somewhat serious" problem. The researchers also found widespread support for all seven proposals. Two times as many respondents supported a total ban on tobacco advertising as those who opposed it. Two-thirds of the respondents supported increasing the excise tax on tobacco (Bailey et al., 1994).

Another study that assessed attitudes towards smoking bans was conducted by Markus, Emont, Corcoran, Giovino, Pierce, Waller, & Davis, (1994). They designed a survey in order to determine public attitudes concerning smoking regulation policies within the United States. Its name was SAVES, or the Smoking Activities Volunteer Executed Survey. They selected residents from four states that met the following criteria: (a) were geographically diverse, (b) had an American Cancer Society office with a history of success with prior ACS projects, and that displayed a willingness and commitment to the cessation of smoking. The four selected states were Pennsylvania, Michigan, Arizona, and Texas. Samples were determined by random phone number clustering, and SAVES was designed to measure a variety of factors, including demographics, smoking history, current smoking habits, attitudes towards smoking, knowledge regarding smoking-related health risks, and exposure to second hand smoking at work and public facilities. The findings from this survey support the current efforts of policy makers to further regulate tobacco. The most widely favored efforts included: stronger legislation, better enforcement of existing laws, and stronger prevention programs in schools. Also, many respondents were reported to have believed that more policies should be created in order to restrict minors' access to cigarettes, and to ban smoking on school properties.

A majority of SAVES respondents favored restrictions on the advertising of tobacco products, as well as further taxation of those products in order to fund anti-smoking advertising campaigns. Although approximately seventy-five percent of the respondents reported the presence of non-smoking areas within their places of work, more than a quarter reported being bothered by smoke within these restricted areas. These findings are consistent with previous research, and suggest that current tobacco policies are not being adequately enforced.

Despite the known health risks, Americans are hesitant to support smoking bans. Even nonsmokers seem to think that banning smoking completely is a violation of people's rights and a form of discrimination. Research found that 68 percent of adults, including 63 percent of smokers, feel that second-hand smoke is harmful to others. Even with this knowledge, 95 percent of smokers oppose total bans on smoking, as do 80 percent of nonsmokers (Robinson et al., 1995). People in the West, East, and Midwest are much more likely to favor smoking bans than those in the South, and nonwhites are more likely to favor bans than whites. Those with higher education status favor bans more than those less educated, while higher income households favor bans in the workplace more often than lower income households (Robinson et al., 1995).

A study conducted by Parry, Platt, & Thomson (2000) presented the somewhat mixed emotions that people have regarding smoking bans. Parry et al. (2000) studied faculty members' opinions on a smoking ban that was instituted at a Scottish University. The researchers found that whether or not the ban was supported, many respondents felt that forcing people to smoke outside of the buildings on campus created an entirely new set of problems that affect both smokers and non-smokers (Parry, et al., 2000). Smoky entrances to buildings, increased amounts of cigarette butts littering the steps, increased risk of smoking-related fires, and the perceptions of visitors who see large groups of smokers huddled in doorways were only several of the new

problems respondents provided (Parry, et al., 2000). Due to these various findings, it is easy to see why attitudes towards smoking are so complex. It not only includes individual beliefs, but cultural, educational, and socioeconomic differences as well.

With all of the previously mentioned health and financial costs of smoking, many people wonder why one would ever start smoking in the first place. Many also question why smokers continue to smoke despite health warnings. Jenks (1994) set out to find people's reasons for smoking, as well as smokers' perceptions of why other people smoke. Jenks found that most people's reasoning behind smoking is that they believe they are psychologically addicted. Relaxation was the second most common reason that participants gave for smoking. The means for these reasons were significantly different from the means for the other three motivations for smoking (physical addiction, pleasant feelings, and weight control). Participants also perceived other people's smoking as being due to relaxation rather than addiction. Jenks also found that the longer people had smoked, the more likely they were to say that they were addicted and that it was difficult to quit. Similarly, the more cigarettes smoked per day, the more likely the person was to say that they were both physically and psychologically addicted. These people were also less likely to say that quitting would be easy. Jenks found no relationship between the length of smoking or the number of cigarettes smoked and the addiction motive or difficulty of quitting with regard to participants' perceptions of others who smoke. Jenks' findings led to the conclusion that smoking is perceived by many to be a physical or psychological addiction. Therefore, quitting is seen by many to be a difficult task.

Much of the research that was previously cited involved adults and their smoking behavior; however, adolescents have become increasingly targeted by tobacco companies. By capturing would-be smokers at their youngest, the tobacco companies are ensuring that they will have customers for many years to come. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (2002) sought to examine the changes in cigarette smoking among high school students for the years 1991-2001 by examining the results of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS). The YRBS consists of an anonymous self-administered questionnaire that assesses three types of smoking behavior: lifetime smoking (having ever smoked cigarettes), current smoking (smoking on at least one of the previous thirty days), and current frequent smoking (smoking on at least twenty of the previous thirty days). The CDC found that lifetime smoking decreased significantly between 1999 and 2001. Current smoking and current frequent smoking were both found to have increased between 1991 and 1997. However, they were also found to have declined significantly in 2001. Despite the hopeful findings that smoking as a whole seems to have decreased, 28.5% of high school students are current smokers and 13.8% are current frequent smokers (Center for Disease Control and Prevention, 2002).

Previous studies have shown that the earlier in life a person begins to smoke, the more likely the person is to become a heavy smoker, and the less likely he/she is to quit. Therefore, there has been an increased interest in combating under-age smoking. It has been suspected that smoking advertising campaigns may force adolescents to believe that smoking is glamorous and cool, thereby encouraging earlier smoking initiation. In response to these effects, there is a great deal of support for anti-smoking campaigns to combat these influences.

Pechman and Ratneshwar (1994) conducted a study in order to determine whether such efforts are really effective. In order to assess this, they selected 304 seventh graders from two southern California school districts. Seventh graders were chosen to participate in this study because of the low probability that they had already begun to smoke. The experimental group was given fabricated magazines that were specially designed by the researchers. These

magazines contained an assortment of advertising, including three anti-smoking ads, and several pro-smoking ads. In contrast, the control group received a magazine that contained only non-smoking related advertisements. Next, both groups were presented with computer monitors that showed images of both smokers and non-smokers. Each participant was administered a questionnaire that requested them to rate the people shown in the images in regards to several characteristics: 1) glamour (popularity, attractiveness, and adventurousness), 2) maturity, 3) common sense (intelligent, smart), 4) health, 5) excitement. The subjects were also asked whether they liked the target. In addition to these attitudinal items, this questionnaire measured participants' recollection of the images, their proficiency in the English language, and whether they could guess the purpose of the research. Prior to this investigation, the subjects indicated that although they did not believe prior to this investigation that smokers differ significantly from non-smokers in terms of maturity or glamour, they did believe that smokers had less common sense, and were less personally likeable. Rather than changing these prior beliefs, the anti-smoking ads seemed to reiterate them, as well as their previous knowledge of the health risks associated with smoking. The anti-smoking ads, however, did succeed in counteracting pro-smoking efforts in stressing glamour and maturity. In contrast, the pro-smoking ads seemed to succeed in eliciting more positive reactions from the subjects towards the targeted smokers, however, these reactions did not apply to the common sense, personal appeal, glamour, or maturity factors. In fact, those who viewed these ads tended to give the target smokers lower ratings in maturity. This is known as the "boomerang effect" (Pechman et al., 1994).

Because attitudes about smoking are changing and bans are beginning to gain more widespread support, smokers may be experiencing increasing amounts of discrimination. Although discrimination against smokers in the workplace has received some attention, little research has focused on prejudice against student smokers in academic settings. In an attempt to focus on this area of research, Brosh, Austin, & Chambliss (2003), conducted a study measuring high school and college students' perceptions of current, former, and nonsmokers. Results indicated that, when compared with college students, high school students perceived their teachers as having greater discriminatory attitudes toward students who smoke (Brosh, Austin, & Chambliss, 2003).

One study conducted by Srebro, Hodges, Authier, & Chambliss (1999) examined attitudes on a college campus by assessing the perceptions of 76 faculty members and 319 college students regarding the smoking behavior of others. Participants were asked to rate the appearance of those smoking on the following dimensions: inadequate, relaxed, anxious, inconsiderate, attractive, sophisticated, secure, immature, content, and intelligent. Results indicated that target smokers were significantly more likely to be described as unattractive and unsophisticated than nonsmokers (Srebro et al., 1999). In addition, a similar study conducted by Hodges, et al., (1999) found respondents, both smoker and nonsmoker alike, rated target smokers less favorably than nonsmokers, along the following positive personality dimensions: attractiveness, sophistication, and contentment. Results indicated that smokers were rarely perceived as secure, intelligent, physically fit, or energized.

Another study conducted by Venuti, Conroy, Bucy, Landis, & Chambliss (2002) revealed that perceptions of smokers are generally more negative than nonsmokers, and generally more negative than members of another widely stigmatized group, clinically obese individuals, on several dimensions. Smokers were viewed more negatively than clinically obese individuals on such dimensions as intelligence, judgment, and conscientiousness. In the area of discrimination, however, participants perceived very little to exist with regard to smokers and employers,

teachers, and fellow students, but did believe that obese people were subject to discrimination. According to Venuti, et al. (2002) these findings may indicate an inaccurate assessment of such discrimination, as there is considerable evidence that smokers are increasingly being stigmatized (Venuti, Conroy, Landis & Chambliss, 2000; Hodges, et al., 1999; Jenks, 1994).

Method

Participants

Respondents were 37 college faculty members from a small liberal arts college in the Northeast United States and 35 high school faculty members from the same area. The sample included 12 male and 23 female high school faculty members, as well as 14 male and 23 female college faculty members

Survey Instrument

The one-page survey consisted of items pertaining to current and previous personal smoking habits, motivations for smoking and not smoking, and perceptions of smokers and nonsmokers, as well as those who quit. Perceptions of smokers, nonsmokers and smokers who had quit were assessed through seven five-point Likert-format items (1=extremely low, 2=somewhat low, 3=neutral, 4=somewhat high, 5=extremely high). Participants were asked to describe their impression of an average student in each of these three categories along the following dimensions: intelligence, hostility, judgment, artistic creativity, independence, conscientiousness, and ambition.

Procedure

Faculty members were sent the one-page survey through campus mail. Those faculty members completing the anonymous survey returned it to a student researcher through campus mail.

Results

Within subject t-tests were used to compare evaluations of students who smoke with evaluations of students who do not smoke, for all faculty respondents (high school and college samples combined). T-tests revealed significant differences in ratings of all characteristics assessed except for artistic creativity (intelligence, independence, conscientiousness, ambition, judgment, and hostility). Smokers were rated more negatively than nonsmokers on each of the personality characteristics (see Table 1). Ratings of smokers' and nonsmokers' artistic creativity were not significantly different. On all of the other six characteristics instructors perceived students who smoke more negatively than students who do not smoke (see Table 1).

Table 1

Ratings of personality characteristics of student smokers and nonsmokers from high school and college instructors (N=70)

	Smoker		Nonsmoker		t	df	p
	x	s.d.	x	s.d.			
Intelligence	2.75	.63	3.74	.74	7.68	69	.000
Independence	2.77	.90	3.63	.73	5.21	69	.000
Conscientious	2.56	.71	4.16	3.57	3.67	69	.000
Ambition	2.70	.62	3.51	.68	6.55	69	.000
Artistic creativity	3.07	.55	3.07	.35	.000	69	ns
Poor Judgment	2.41	1.24	1.70	.93	6.07	70	.000
Hostility	3.04	.73	2.55	.77	4.11	70	.000

Independent samples t-tests were performed to compare high school and college instructors' ratings of students who smoke cigarettes. High school instructors' ratings of smokers were significantly more negative than ratings obtained from college instructors on several of the dimensions evaluated. High school instructors described smokers as less intelligent than college instructors described those students ($t = -3.65$, $df = 69$, $p < .01$). High school instructors also rated student smokers as less independent than college instructors rated them ($t = -2.14$, $df = 69$, $p < .05$). In comparison with college instructors, high school instructors also perceived smokers as being less conscientious ($t = -1.99$, $df = 69$, $p < .05$).

Table 2

High school and college instructors' ratings of students who smoke cigarettes

	High school instructors (n=35)		College instructors (n=37)	
	x	s.d.	x	s.d.
Intelligence	2.50	.65	3.00	.49
Independence	2.56	1.00	3.00	.73
Conscientious	2.41	.76	2.74	.62

Discussion

These results provide support for the notion that faculty members of educational communities tend to view students who smoke more negatively than students who refrain from smoking. The disparaging ratings of student smokers, provided by both students and faculty members alike, suggest that students who choose to smoke publicly are likely to be seen prejudicially and may even expose themselves to discriminatory behavior.

The faculty members' negative evaluations of students who smoke suggests that students who smoke publicly may be judged more harshly by their instructors. The only characteristic that was not negatively associated with smoking was perceived artistic creativity. However, it is important to note that on this variable instructors perceived no difference between smokers and nonsmokers. Smoking conferred no advantage, challenging the assumption that smoking serves as a marker for this socially desirable characteristic.

The finding that high school instructors were more critical than college instructors of students who smoke cigarettes is consistent with the perceptions of students reported in previous research (Brosh, Austin & Chambliss, 2003). Future research might assess whether faculty in graduate programs and professional schools express even less critical attitudes toward smokers.

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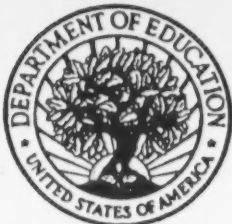
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